

tural improvement in the buildings of the metropolis.

That your petitioners consider the said Bill as an attempt to perpetuate an unnecessary and injurious interference with the details of the construction of houses, and that even with its cumbersome machinery of a new court of law and its fines and imprisonment, it will not achieve what is sought for by the preamble, viz.—the proper construction of buildings, the health of persons residing therein, or the more effectual administration of the law in relation thereto.

That your petitioners further consider, that many of its provisions are a direct encroachment on the rights and liberties of the people, and that should the Bill be passed into a law, that its great enactments never can or will be enforced. That an Act of Parliament, your petitioners submit, would neither be just nor efficient, and would be better qualified to entrap than direct those it should govern.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will reject the said Bill, and pass a law to regulate the party and external walls, and the covering of the roof, of every house shall be constructed with incombustible materials to prevent the spread of fire from one building to another, leaving it to the architect or builder to exercise his own taste and skill in the erection of the house or other buildings, without any reference whatever to limitation of size or details of construction, and that the supervision of all buildings may be placed in the hands of surveyors appointed by and under the control of the parochial authorities, to be assisted by a surveyor-in-chief, as arbitrator in all technical matters, leaving all legal questions to be determined by the stipendiary magistrates of the district or by the County Court of the locality. Also that an Act on this principle may be extended to the whole kingdom."

On the 12th this subject was brought before the Marylebone vestry. Mr. George Bird said that the Bill was tyrannical and oppressive, and, if passed, would prevent a man interfering with the interior of his own house unless he had the permission of the Government surveyor. Under the present Act the fines and penalties inflicted last year amounted to 36,600*l.*, which would be increased to 60,000*l.* if the proposed Act became law. Even a poor landlady would not be permitted to alter her copper without giving forty-eight hours' notice to the surveyor, who would be paid for inspecting the apartments, in addition to the 5*l.* which the resetting of the copper would cost. In conclusion, he moved the appointment of a committee to confer with the metropolitan parishes to obtain a fair, just, and equitable Building Act, instead of the proposed arbitrary, unconstitutional measure now before the House. The motion was carried.

Last week Lord Seymour received a deputation from the Royal Institute of British Architects with much courtesy, and having heard the suggestions offered with apparent attention, expressed a wish to receive a more comprehensive opinion from the body of the Institute on the general principles of the Metropolitan Buildings Bill, and in relation to the schedules. A very full committee has been named, consisting of the Council, with Messrs. Bellamy, Manning, Cundy, Cumberledge, Gwynn, Hardwick, Jennings, Pockock, Smirke, and Tite, with power to add to their numbers.

SCHOOLS FOR ST. JAMES'S, WESTMINSTER.—The lamentable occurrence at the Tooting Pauper School has not, we find, been lost on the authorities of this parish, nor, we hope, on the future prospects of their pauper children. The governors of the poor have purchased a site of twenty acres of land, adjoining Battersea Common, Surrey, where industrial schools for boys, girls, and infants, are about to be erected under the superintendence of Mr. Charles Lee, architect. These schools are to be like those lately erected by the same architect at Chertsey, and at Egham. The larger portion of the boys will be removed on the land, by which means they will, it is hoped, be able to find country or seasonal employment, instead of swelling the large pauper population of London, the consequence of bringing them up as chamois and tailors in London workhouses.

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

THE works connected with the crossing at the mouth of the river Tay, on the Edinburgh and Dundee Railway, are nearly finished. The crossing is effected by means of a floating railway, which will steam between Ferry-Port-on-Craig and Broughty Ferry, at each of which places a basin has been prepared for landing. The basin at Ferry-Port is about 600 feet long and 280 broad, with entrance lock 25 feet wide; depth of water at extreme ebb 3 feet, at flow 26. There is a coal staith with tipping cranes and other facilities for loading vessels by wagon-loads at once. Dundee and other towns will thus be supplied from the adjoining county of Fife instead of from Newcastle, as it is at present. An inclined plane and adjustable platforms lead the carriages down to the dock of the float, the latter of which is about 150 feet long and 30 broad, and is worked by two portable engines of 50-horse power each. The basin at Broughty is nearly as large as that at the north side. The crossing is now open. As the engineers of the Whitehaven and Glasgow line was boring between the summit of that railway and the Whitehaven Junction line, preparatory to commencing the tunnel, which is in future to connect the two lines, he came upon a seam of excellent coal, not less than 7 feet thick, and very little below the surface. A temporary describes a "model of a set of girders for a road crossing a railway, the invention of Mr. T. Adcock, jun. of Penbridge, joiner and builder." The object of the invention is to enable one man to open four gates simultaneously. The gates are connected by iron rods attached to the heel of each gate, and carried through a tube beneath the ground. They are worked by a jointed chain passing over the segment of a cylinder. If our contemporary thinks that this invention is quite new, he will find by reference to THE BUILDER's indices that he is mistaken. The first rails on the Panama Railroad were laid on 24th Feb. Most of the labourers had been ill with fever. The Copiapo railroad is making progress. About four miles of track had been already laid. The survey of the route for the Santiago Railway has been commenced. The surveying party have already carried their line as far as Vina de Mar. Hitherto, it is said, no insuperable difficulties have been encountered. The railway between Carilo and Lima is progressing rapidly, and will be completed probably in April. The estimates for the completion of the Southport Railway, by continuing it into Chapel-street, says the *Lancaster Times*, and also for the proposed extension, has been taken by the successors to Messrs. S. and J. Holmes, of this town. The new station will have about thirty platforms. The old erection, which is composed of timber, will be removed from its present site into Kirkstall. Mr. Verity, the contractor, is commencing the cutting of the South Yorkshire Branch Railway, which extends from Warborough to the Black Horse, on Silkestone Common. Mr. Verity's portion of contract is at the Warborough end. A model has been sent to the International Exhibition of the wrought iron girder bridge for the South Wales Company, intended to span the Wye at Chepstow, and in course of construction at the works of Messrs. Finch and Willey, of Liverpool, engineers. The design is by Mr. Brunel. The extreme length of the bridge is 629 feet, height from bottom of river 106 feet. The number of links used in its construction is 1,000. The bridge will be a kind of suspension one, of novel construction. The last great sale at the Britannia Tabular Bridge has just been reported on. The property was that of Messrs. Nowell, Hemmingsways, and Pearson, and of the Chester and Holyhead Railway Company. A correspondent of *Hieropolis Journal*, in speaking of the hopeful prospects of railway property in general, since the main and consequent panic, refers to a saving of 60 per cent. on the cost of engines, and 57 per cent. on the consumption of coke, now being effected by the Edinburgh and Glasgow company, who are working one-third of their passenger trains with an engine costing about 1,000*l.* and consuming 10 lbs. of coke per mile, instead of the

heavy engines previously employed, which cost about 2,000*l.* and consumed 30 lbs. per mile. The saving, caused by the relief afforded to the permanent way, is so taken into consideration. This item of locomotive power is a most important one, for it costs the London and North-Western company, in the items of coals and coke alone, a sum of 110,000*l.* annually. The light locomotives alluded to, if we mistake not, are those manufactured by Messrs. England and Company. The same writer notes the remarkable increase of population in districts through which railways run, as a source of increasing prosperity. The increase of fourth class travellers on railways is something extraordinary. While the number of first-class travellers has increased 16, and of second-class 97 per cent., and while third-class travellers have actually diminished 2 per cent., the passengers by parliamentary trains have increased 330 per cent. upon their number in 1846. Yet, for their most numerous class of customers, railway directors seem to take the least care. The coal monopoly of London is already tottering to its fall by the inroads of the Great Northern supply upon the market at reasonable prices. The *Observer* says, that the price will, in all probability, be brought down to 15*s.* a ton. We hope to see it some even than that ere long. Plank roads have been extensively constructed in the state of New York, and, instead of lessening the disposition for railways, have very sensibly contributed to render them not only more necessary, but more lucrative. The plank roads have cost on an average 1,533 dollars per mile. A pair of horses on such a road perform twice the work they could do on a common road in good order, while their improved condition and diminished cost far more than make up for the outlay in tolls.

LARCH—(PINUS LARIX).

In reply to your correspondent, who wishes for information respecting the durability of larch, permit me to state, that for years past I have made it my study to test the lasting qualities of that most valuable yet too much neglected timber, and can, with respect to its being second to none, not even English oak, in its possession of that quality. I have, upon every opportune occasion, recommended its introduction to some of the best builders of the day, and also to the railway and electric telegraph companies, and always, where used, it has given the greatest satisfaction, and, if wished, I can point out works carried out with it, where it may be seen and tested.

Permit me to take this opportunity of calling the attention of large estate owners to the value and beauty of the larch fir, and conclude with an old writer, that if the singularly unfertile heaths in the southern counties of Surrey, Sussex, and Hampshire, and also many other places which at present lie barren to the country, yet on which larch rises with luxuriance, were planted with these trees, they would probably pay a hundred-fold, compared with any other crop they are capable of producing. I know this to be the case from the price I have paid per acre, and the time they took growing, &c.

FRED. S. MARTIN.

ARTISTS' GENERAL BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.—The anniversary festival of this excellent charity was held on Saturday evening, in the Freemasons' Hall, Sir E. H. Inglis in the chair, and several of the most eminent artists of the day were present. The subscriptions announced in course of the evening amounted to upwards of 400*l.* although the meeting was less numerously attended than usual. The expenditure of last year was little short of 1,000*l.* In all, 19,661*l.* have been expended in relieving 1,230 cases of sickness amongst artists, their widows, and orphans.

COLONNAD.—The alterations necessary for producing the two grand panoramas "Landscape by Day," as a morning, and "Shore by Night," for the evening exhibition, are completed, and this establishment, which has been redecorated, will open on Easter Monday.